

The story of the Man from Syria
Islamic Stories - Volume 66
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Chapter 1: A Journey for Knowledge

Elderly Resolve: The Seeker from Syria

During the caliphate of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA), a man journeyed from the region of al-Shām (Syria) to the sacred city of Madīnah. He was seventy or eighty years of age. The arduous journey under the blazing sun had darkened his skin so severely that it appeared darker than the very ground he walked upon. His hair had grown long and unkempt, bearing the clear signs of a long and weary travel.

Caliphal Concern: A Question of Purpose

Upon observing this aged traveller, Caliph 'Umar (RA) approached him with compassion and concern. He was struck by the visible toll the journey had taken on the man's body and spirit. With earnest curiosity, he inquired as to the reason behind such a formidable voyage in the twilight years of life.

A Humble Intention:

Elder:

"I have come to learn the words of al-Taḥiyyāt."

The statement was simple, yet its sincerity left an indelible mark on the heart of the Caliph.

Tears of Reverence: The Caliph's Emotional Response

At these words, ‘Umar (RA) was so deeply moved that he began to weep. The author of Ḥadā’iq al-Anwār records:

"Until his blessed beard was drenched with tears."

Tears fell in steady drops from his face, and he continued weeping for a long time. Then, swearing by the One in whose hand his soul resided, the Caliph proclaimed:

A Divine Oath:

‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (RA):

"By Him in Whose Hand is my soul, you shall not be punished."

The Camel's Burden: A Testament of Devotion

Why such a declaration? The old man had abandoned the comfort of his home and endured the back of a camel, travelling through the harsh desert, solely to acquire knowledge of a single aspect of religion. His intention was pure, and his commitment unwavering. Such was the reverence for knowledge and the esteem with which it was held by the righteous predecessors.